

OCTOBER 2024

# inspiration

M A G A Z I N E

## *Your* Double- Portion Life

Is Your God  
Alive?

Keys to Double-  
Portion Faith

Tabernacle with  
the Lord



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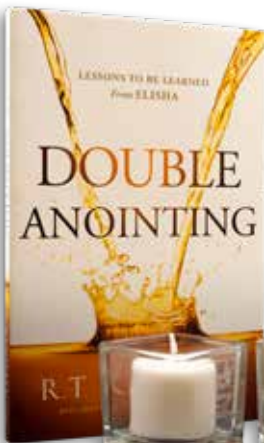


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## Your Double-Portion Life



Your Father has a special, double-portion blessing for you during this season of Tabernacles. Check out David Cerullo's article "You Were Made for This Moment" (**on p. 5**) where he explains why this is your appointed time to release God's amazing abundance in your life.



**Turn to page 28** for details about our THANK YOU GIFTS.

Act quickly—supplies are limited.

## EDITOR'S CORNER



Roone Acree

I'm so grateful for your faithful partnership in this worldwide ministry we share. As you read the October edition of your *INSPIRATION MAGAZINE*, you'll sense my excitement about this special season of God's favor and breakthroughs. Just as a farmer who faithfully plants seeds will have a great sense of *anticipation* as harvest season

approaches, you can expect a fantastic harvest from God when you sow your financial seeds into the Good Ground of this ministry. I pray this month is a time of extraordinary blessings... for you and your loved ones!

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*Philip Yancey*

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October 14–October 25



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## Unlocking God's Blessings

October 28–November 22



If you are dealing with anxiety, financial lack, sickness, loneliness, or some other distressing situation, God has a plan to set you FREE! In this series, David Cerullo reveals your Heavenly Father's desire that you prosper and be in health in every area of your life.

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# You Were Made for This Moment

It's your appointed time to release God's amazing abundance in your life.



**STRENGTHEN**  
*your walk™*

Esther seemed like an unlikely hero. A Hebrew orphan raised by her Uncle Mordecai, she belonged to a people who had endured over a century of captivity. Yet the Lord had plans for her far beyond her imagination. Without her consent, Esther was taken to the opulent palace in Shushan, where she was placed under the watchful eye of Hegai, the eunuch in charge of the king's harem.

But rather than succumbing to bitterness or resentment over her circumstances, Esther maintained a quiet, humble spirit. She chose not to seek her own desires but to submit to the greater plan that God had for her.

Esther's story unfolds like a modern-day fairytale: a beautiful Jewish girl plucked from her homeland and brought to Persia; a tyrannical king who, having banished his queen, sought a new one; and the villainous Haman, who devised a plot to destroy the Jewish people.

In a moment of grave danger for the Jews, Mordecai delivered these timeless words to Esther:

*If you keep silent at this time, liberation and rescue for the Jews will arise from another place, and you and your father's family will*

*perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?* (Esther 4:14 NASB)

Your life may not mirror Esther's dramatic tale, but it holds immense value in God's eyes. Just as He orchestrated every detail of Esther's journey for a crucial purpose, He is also carefully weaving the threads of your life into a magnificent tapestry that reflects His glory.

Today, trust that your unknown future is in the hands of an all-knowing God. For the Jewish people and all believers, there is an enduring promise: *"He has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live"* (Acts 17:26 CSB). God has placed you in this specific time in history and has orchestrated your experiences to prepare you for His purposes. Now is your time to shine!

Even when some things don't seem to make sense, God has a plan for your victory and success (Jeremiah 29:11). He has an amazing ending in mind for YOUR story, just as He accomplished for Esther!

## **A SPECIAL SEASON OF BREAKTHROUGHS**

Although God has ordained amazing endings for His people, that doesn't mean our lives will always be easy. I hear from so many of our friends and Inspiration partners who've experienced difficult seasons recently in their health, finances, families, or peace of mind.

However, God knows we all need breakthroughs in our lives from time to time. That's why He has put special days and seasons on His calendar. This month we will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, one of His three appointed times each year to bless His people with

amazing blessings (see Exodus 23 and Leviticus 23).

Along with the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost, Tabernacles is one of three holy convocations—special times of the year that we're to celebrate FOREVER—*"throughout your generations"* (Leviticus 23:21 CSB). The Lord calls these special dates on the calendar *"MY appointed times"* (Leviticus 23:2 CSB), days meant to be set aside for *HIM*.

God says He wants to meet with us during these three appointed times—to receive our praise, our consecration, and our offerings. He promises that if we faithfully observe these special seasons, He will then bless us in seven specific ways (Exodus 23:20–30): He promises protection...to be an enemy to our enemies...prosperity...removal of sickness...length of life until your appointed time...increase and an inheritance...return of what was lost to the enemy.

But during the Tabernacles season, an open window of Heaven offers even more! Joel 2 explains the additional DOUBLE-PORTION blessings God provides:

1. A double portion of rain (v. 23)
2. Financial prosperity (v. 24)
3. Restoration (v. 25)
4. Marvelous wonders (v. 26, 30)
5. God's presence and favor (v. 27)
6. Blessings for your children (v. 28)
7. Deliverance from harm or oppression (v. 32)

## **A TIME TO HARVEST**

King Solomon reminds us of the importance of recognizing God's special times and seasons:

**Just as you've faithfully obeyed God during your "time to plant," you will experience great joy during this "time to harvest."**

**Trust that your unknown future is in the hands of an all-knowing God.**



For everything there is a **season**,  
A **time** for every activity under heaven...  
A time to **plant** and a time to **harvest**  
(Ecclesiastes 3:1–2 NLT).

I believe this verse contains a powerful message of encouragement from the Lord.

**Just as you've faithfully obeyed God during your "time to plant," you will experience great joy during this "time to harvest."**

You see, the celebration of these three feasts is a way to synchronize our lives with God's cycle of seed-time and harvest. As we are faithful and obedient to bring our *special* offerings to Him during these feasts, God keeps His Word to bless our lives with a **DOUBLE PORTION** during the next season. Just as the Israelites learned this rhythm of living in the covenant promises of God, we must learn it too!

## IN DUE SEASON

Few things in life are more difficult than waiting for our harvest. We live in a microwave society that expects quick and easy results, and sometimes we're like that in our prayer life.

However, farmers know they must patiently *wait* for their season of harvest. If they've faithfully planted and watered their seeds,

it's only a matter of time before their harvest comes:

For **whatever** a man sows, that he **will** also reap...And let us not grow weary while doing good, for **in due season we shall reap** if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:7–9).

Where are YOU right now in this process, my friend? If you've not planted any seeds, you can't expect a harvest. But if you **HAVE** sown seeds into God's Kingdom by faith, it's crucial that you continue to patiently believe Him for your harvest blessings.

Remember, God has a "*due season*" for you—a time to reap what you've faithfully sown. And I believe that season is at hand as we celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles this month.

So I encourage you to trust God today—with your life, your time, your resources, with everything. He has a plan to bless you in "*such a time as this.*" You, friend, were made for this moment!

Your partner to reach the lost,

*David*

P.S. Turn to page 28 to see the life-changing resources we want to sow back into your life to help unlock a new season of God's blessings and breakthroughs.



# TOUCHING LIVES Around the World!

Thanks to your partnership with Inspiration Ministries, **OVER 4 MILLION** souls have said **YES** to Jesus this year!

"I was addicted to drugs and spent many years on the streets. But one day I called your International Prayer Center, desperate to end my addiction and give my heart to Jesus. After a prayer minister led me in the prayer to surrender my life to Christ, I knew God had saved me and delivered me from drugs!"—JEAN, Georgia

"I always knew I needed God in my life, but something kept holding me back until I happened to watch one of your broadcasts. Since watching your program, I've rededicated my life to God and am now on fire for Him!"—DEBORAH, Nevada

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# Is Your God Alive?

You can hardly read the Bible without encountering the subject of idolatry: It ranks as by far the most common topic discussed. For us modern readers, though, a nagging question hangs over those passages: Why all the fuss? What's the big attraction with idols anyway? Why did the Hebrews, for example, keep deserting Yahweh, the God who had delivered them from Egypt, for the sake of carved tree trunks and bronze statues?

I gained insight into this issue on a visit to India where idol worship flourishes. The four-star attractions in most Indian cities are temples erected to honor any of a thousand gods: monkeys, elephants, snakes, even a small-pox goddess. There, I observed that idolatry tends to produce two contradictory results: magic and triviality.

For the devout, idolatry adds a dimension of magic to life. Hindus believe the gods control all events, including natural disasters, diseases, and traffic accidents. These powerful forces must be kept happy...but devotion to such gods can easily lead to a paralyzing fear and virtual slavery to a god's whims.

Other Hindus, less devout, take a different approach. They treat their gods as trivialities, almost like good-luck charms. A taxi driver mounts a tiny statue of a monkey god, draped with flowers, on the dashboard of his car. If you inquire, he'll say he prays to the god for safety—but you know about the traffic in India, he adds.

Both these modern responses to idolatry illustrate what so alarmed the prophets of Israel. No attitude could be further from that demanded by Yahweh, the true

God. He had chosen the Hebrews as a kingdom of priests. He mocked the ludicrousness of carving a god out of a tree, then using branches from the same tree to cook a meal (Isaiah 44:16). He is the Lord of the universe, not a good-luck charm.

Why did sinister idols like Baal prove so irresistible? Like farm kids gawking at big-city life, the Israelites moved from 40 years of wilderness wanderings into a land of superior cultural achievement. When they settled down to the new occupation of farming, they looked to a Canaanite deity, Baal, for help in controlling the weather. In other words, they sought a shortcut through magic.

Idols became a phantom source of power, an alternative place to invest faith and hope. The worship of graven images disappeared from Israel only after God took the extreme measure of dismantling the nation.

In our modern society, dominated by appeals to image and status, idols abound. Some gods—mammon, beauty, success—appeal to our thirst for magic. I worry more, however, about the false

gods that escape easy detection, the ones that tend toward triviality, not magic.

What modern idols make God seem trivial? What tends to reduce the surprise, passion, the vitality of my relationship with God? Most days, I am not so conscious of choosing between a god and God; the alternatives do not present themselves so clearly. Rather, I find God edged out by a series of small distractions. A car repair, last-minute plans, a leaky gutter, a friend's wedding—these trivialities may lead to a form of forgetfulness that resembles idolatry in its most dangerous form. The busyness of life, including religious busyness, can crowd out God.

I confess that some days I meet people, work, make decisions, talk on the phone, all without giving God a single thought. I turned a skeptic's accusation of a friend: "But you don't act like you believe God is alive" into a question:

Do I act like God is alive?

It is a good question, one that lies at the heart of all idolatry, and one that I must ask myself again every day. ❖

**Philip Yancey** is an accomplished author who explores the central issues of the Christian faith as he searches for an expansive faith full of grace and meaning.

Excerpt from *I Was Just Wondering* by Philip Yancey ©1989 & 1998 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Printed with permission. <https://www.amazon.com/Was-Just-Wondering-Philip-Yancey/dp/0802836712>





# Celebrate the Fruit of the Spirit

## Joyful Praise with Gracie B Sing-Along Songs!

*“Let my mouth be filled with Your praise, and with Your glory all the day.”*

—Psalm 71:8 NKJV

Gracie B loves to sing and praise God! Now your children and grandchildren can join her in worship with our delightful sing-along songs.

These joyful melodies are more than just songs. They’re a way for our little ones to grow in faith and celebrate the beauty of praising God.



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- “A Promise Is a Promise”
- “Busy as a Bee”
- “Get Happy”

If you know kids who love to sing, you can purchase downloads on iTunes and Amazon Music for a small fee or watch and sing along for free on our **Gracie B YouTube channel.**



Ep. 1 | Love



Ep. 2 | Joy



Ep. 3 | Peace



Ep. 4 | Patience



Ep. 5 | Kindness



Ep. 6 | Goodness



Ep. 7 | Faithfulness



Ep. 8 | Mercy



Ep. 9 | Self-Control

Join Gracie B and friends as they spread love, joy, and kindness through music!



# I Needed Help...

And Inspiration Ministries Was There!

At the tender age of 12, Nancy was living out a nightmare.

Desperately broken by childhood sexual abuse, she began to consider suicide to end the pain. Thankfully her mom, though battling her own demons, had taken Nancy to church where she heard about a God who loved her and wanted to save her. Though life didn't offer much evidence of love, that seed of hope sustained her through dark times.

The trials continued. At 19, while working the night shift at a truck stop, Nancy was abducted and sexually violated. The rape resulted in pregnancy, and miraculously Nancy chose to have the baby. Her attacker was arrested

and returned to his home state to stand trial on other charges, but Nancy resolutely put the savage incident behind her—choosing to know nothing of the rapist, including his name.

While precious baby Chelsea opened Nancy's heart to love in a way she had never known before, her life remained chaotic. When Nancy became pregnant again, she chose an abortion, which only deepened her emotional pain. Ten years passed before Nancy surrendered to the healing forgiveness of God...and entered into the reality of His love. It took another decade before she found a church home that accepted and nurtured her. Throughout her journey,

Inspiration Ministries played a crucial role in her spiritual growth. She recalls:

“God puts certain posts in front of me that are exactly what I need. One day I saw an invitation to seek prayer from the ministry, and I took it! I believe God has a plan for us and provides support in every battle. I needed help, and Inspiration Ministries was there, offering that help.”

As God continued to strengthen Nancy, He allowed life to present new circumstances and challenges that helped her grow in Christ-likeness. When her daughter Chelsea became interested in genealogy, a DNA test soon connected her with a half-sister—another daughter of Nancy's rapist. Suddenly the nameless attacker locked in a closet of her memory had a name—and he lived as a free man in Florida.

God began to help Nancy learn forgiveness in depths many will never know. Safe and secure in the love of her husband, her church, and her Savior, Nancy began to

process what had happened all those years before—in the light of Christ's forgiveness. When Chelsea chose to meet her birth father, Nancy and her husband traveled with her.

“Seeing him again after 28 years dug up a lot of emotions I hadn't felt in years. But that is when God covers us with His grace and His presence, and He gets us through these things.”

“I think he was a very wild, out-of-control young man. He didn't care about other people. He very sincerely apologized to me for what he had done to me, and I forgave him. It wasn't easy, but two ladies from my church had talked and prayed with me, and God got me through it.”

Nancy's life radiates the grace she has received and is an inspiration for us all. She chooses to honor the Savior who rescues her from sin—her own and others—and uses life's painful experiences to draw her closer to His everlasting love. ❖

**What is YOUR testimony of God's faithfulness and work in your life?**

Share it with us and our Inspiration partners by visiting [inspiration.org/praise](https://www.inspiration.org/praise) TODAY!





# Keys to Double-Portion Faith



Ben Cerullo

Do you need more faith in your life? What if there were ways you could actually *double* the amount of faith you have for God's blessing, power, and provision?

Today I challenge you to take a journey beyond superficial faith and into a dimension of faith where the *impossible* becomes *possible*. Jesus wasn't kidding when He promised, "*ALL things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23 NKJV).

What an awesome promise! Instead of being a mere theory or religious platitude, faith is the bridge that allows believers to tap into the supernatural power of God. Just as money is the currency to obtain things on earth, faith is the currency of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The writer of the book of Hebrews warns that it's *impossible* to please God without faith

(Hebrews 11:6). He didn't say it's merely *hard*, but that it's IMPOSSIBLE! This means faith is not merely a nice option in our walk with the Lord—it's critical.

People frequently say, "Seeing is believing," but in reality, the opposite is true: *Believing is seeing*. Faith takes what we believe and allows the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see it come to pass.

## PROMISES FOR A DOUBLE PORTION

The Bible is full of wonderful promises about God's desire to give His people a double-portion of blessings, and this must always come as a result of faith. God's favor is unleashed when we take Him at His Word and claim His covenant promises:

*Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you* (Zechariah 9:11–12 NKJV).

Through faith, prisoners are set free from "*the waterless pit*," and instead they become "*prisoners of hope*." There may be trials along the way, but God promises, "*I will restore DOUBLE to you*."

Another principle of double-portion faith is that we must

expose the lies and thievery of the enemy. Exodus 22:4 (ESV) says, "*If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession...he shall pay double*."

This is a great promise! The devil is a thief, intent on stealing our health, possessions, relationships, peace of mind, or anything else he can. However, when we catch him in his schemes, this verse teaches we can expect to be repaid *double for our trouble!*

## DOUBLE HONOR AND JOY

Isaiah 61:7 (NKJV) promises:

*Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; Everlasting joy shall be theirs.*

Take a moment and let these words sink into your heart. Are you dealing with feelings of guilt and shame? Through the blood of Jesus, your shame can be replaced with forgiveness and "*double honor*." Are you struggling with confusion? The Lord wants to replace it with His double portion of provision and "*everlasting joy*."

Friend, I'm praying for you to cast off Satan's lies and believe God's Word today. Your double portion is closer than you've ever dreamed! ❖

# Heaven's Prosperity & Increase!

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An INSPIRATION MINISTRIES MONTHLY PARTNER is someone who joins hands with David Cerullo and commits to sowing *monthly seeds* into God's Kingdom through the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries. Each month, you'll be impacting people worldwide through Inspiration Ministries' many outreaches!

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"I clearly heard God tell me to start sowing monthly \$58 seeds into your ministry. Amazingly, just a week after I sowed my first \$58 seed, I unexpectedly received a check for \$5,864! Heaven is pouring out prosperity and increase in my life."

—RONNEY, North Carolina

Just as Ronney is experiencing the blessings of God from faithful sowing, millions around the world are hearing the Gospel and declaring Jesus as their Lord and Savior from the seeds sown into the Good Ground of Inspiration Ministries.

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## The Storms of Life

BIBLE READING: ACTS 27

The people aboard the ship had every reason to be afraid. They were being battered by furious winds, and dangerous waves bashed against the boat. The desperate conditions continued day after day with no end in sight.

Struggling to survive, many became discouraged and were ready to give up, even Paul's traveling companion Luke. It seemed there was no hope that they would be saved.

In the midst of this crisis, Paul remained calm. He urged the passengers to "take heart," promising that "there will be no loss of life" (v. 22). He was so confident because an angel had appeared to him and told him not to be afraid, and "God has granted you all those who sail with you" (v. 24).

Paul absolutely believed this promise and trusted in God to deliver them. He declared his belief: "It will be just as it was told me" (v. 25). They heeded Paul's directions and were saved.

We may go through many types of storms in our lives. Like the men on that ship, we may be tempted to give up or give in to fear. These are moments to remember God's promises, to renew our faith in Him, to call on Him to express our concerns and fears, and to be confident in Him whatever the circumstances.

Right now, no matter what you are going through, have faith in God! Trust Him!

Journal about a storm you're currently facing.

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TUESDAY

October

1

*A tempestuous headwind arose [...] when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.*

Acts 27:14, 20 NKJV

## PRAYER:

Father, give me peace in every situation I face. I seek Your help and protection. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.



*Who is a God like You,  
who pardons iniquity...  
He does not retain His  
anger forever, because  
He delights in mercy...  
You will cast all their  
sins into the depths of  
the sea.*

Micah 7:18–19 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, cleanse my heart.  
Thank You for forgiving  
me. Thank You for setting  
me free! In Jesus' name,  
amen.

Compose a prayer asking for God's forgiveness for specific sins.

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## A New Beginning

BIBLE READING: MICAH 7

Rosh Hashanah begins today at sundown. This, the Jewish New Year, starts a special ten-day period that ends on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). God commanded that during this special time, His people were to search their souls and seek to make things right with Him and others (Leviticus 23).

On this day, many Jewish households carry on the tradition of *tashlich* (to cast off). As Sam Nadler describes, this “involves going to the seashore or the bank of a river.” There, “participants toss breadcrumbs into the water as prayers are said regarding God’s forgiveness.”

It is a reminder that God promises to forgive us. In fact, He casts our sins “into the depths of the sea.”

There was a reason God commanded that Rosh Hashanah be one of His feasts to be celebrated (Leviticus 23:2). He knows that all of us sin. We all need a new beginning.

Today, seek to cleanse your heart. Are there things that block the flow of His blessings for you? Are you troubled by anxiety or worry? Have you allowed sin or unhealthy habits to dominate your life?

Be honest with God. Lay your burdens at His feet. He is ready to forgive you (1 John 1:9). He wants to bless you in new ways. Experience the joy of forgiveness and being clean. Then start celebrating. Let this be a day of new beginnings!

## Nothing But a Slave

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

How did Paul define himself? He had never been to Rome and did not know most of these people. When writing to believers in Rome, he had a perfect opportunity, so he chose to define himself as a *slave* of Jesus Christ.

In Greek, this letter opens with two words: *Paulos doulos*. Simply, “Paul, a bondservant.” Or, more accurately, Paul, a slave. He used words that defined who he was and that were an important key to the Gospel.

These concepts were familiar to everyone in Rome, for this city and society were *dominated* by slaves. As Roman rule expanded, the number of slaves increased.

Paul was stating in unmistakable terms that he was subject to Jesus and had submitted his personal will to Him! This attitude defined his life and his ministry.

These opening words of the letter set an important tone for who Paul was. Through his example, he underscored an attitude that all believers should seek to adopt.

Jesus also taught this principle, telling His disciples that people in the world seek to enhance their reputation and “*exercise authority*.” But greatness in the Kingdom of God requires the attitude of a servant. Those who wish to be first must seek to serve others (Matthew 20:25–28).

Paul’s words remind us that we are all called to be servants. We should seek to serve God and others and be committed to following His call.

How can you practically serve others today?

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*Paul, a bondservant of  
Jesus Christ, called to be  
an apostle, separated to  
the gospel of God.*

Romans 1:1 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, I declare that  
Jesus is my Lord. I submit  
my life to You. Help me to  
serve You and please You.  
In Jesus' name, amen.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Romans 1:16 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, open the eyes of those who are spiritually blind. Bring revival. Pour out Your Spirit on my life and people in my country. In Jesus' name, amen.

With whom can you share your personal testimony today?

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# The Power of God

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

A “renegade from the faith...very obnoxious...spiritually...dangerous” are words James B. Finley used to describe himself as a young man. He was born to godly parents in 1781 in North Carolina, where his father was a missionary. But in his youth, he questioned his faith and “entered fully and freely into all parties of pleasure.”

When he was 20, he was curious and attended the camp meeting in Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Although amazed to see thousands of people worshipping God, he stayed aloof, feeling it was just “religious enthusiasm.”

With a “proud and hard” heart, he fled to a nearby tavern but found no escape. Still struggling, he returned to the camp meeting.

The next morning he left for home, feeling like “a ruined man.” He and a companion traveled silently. When they reached a nearby town, “like long-pent-up waters...the fountains of my soul were broken up.” His eyes streamed with “bitter tears.” He and his friend spent the night weeping.

Still crying the next morning, a stranger knelt beside him. Together they prayed and sang until Finley felt the guilt of sin lift. It was like “Heaven shone full upon my soul.” His life was changed forever.

The world is full of skeptics and people who doubt God and resist the work of the Spirit. Pray that His power will change them and that their eyes will be opened. Be ready to share the Gospel with all who are seeking truth.

# Daily Sins

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 1

Paul warned the Romans about the tragic consequences of sexual immorality. He wrote about “*vile passions*” and things that were “*not fitting*,” and “*shameful*” actions that resulted in “*a debased mind*” (vs. 26–28). These are serious sins that are offensive to God and demonstrate that people have abandoned His laws.

It is important to read this passage in context. This kind of serious immorality clearly is evil, but other, less dramatic sins are just as bad in God’s sight.

These sins include “*greed, hate, envy... quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip*,” being “*proud and boastful*,” disobedience, failing to keep promises, heartlessness, and acting without mercy (vs. 29–31 NLT).

These are the kinds of attitudes and actions we see all around us in our daily lives that may not seem so bad. Even Christians can find themselves engaging in these kinds of activities without realizing their consequences or how much they can tarnish our testimony.

Today, be on guard against these kinds of *practical* sins. People all around you may engage in deceit or gossip. You may be tempted to be boastful, become envious, or withhold forgiveness or mercy. But make sure to take Paul’s warning seriously. In God’s sight, sin is sin.

Ask God for His forgiveness for *any* kind of sin. Seek His help to live purely and cleanly, so others can see how Christ has changed your life.

Reflect on these sinful attitudes and actions that may be in your heart.

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*God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.*

Romans 1:28 NKJV

**PRAYER:**

Father, examine my heart. Show me any attitudes that are displeasing to You. Forgive me and make me clean in Your sight. In Jesus' name, amen.



*God, Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who... was raised to secure our justification (our acquittal), [making our account balance and absolving us from all guilt before God].*

Romans 4:24–25 AMPC

### PRAYER:

Father, I confess these sins: \_\_\_\_\_. I accept Your forgiveness. Thank You that I am free and no longer must carry the burden of guilt. In Jesus' name, amen.

Compose a prayer of confession and repentance.

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## Freedom From Guilt

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 4

After Adam and Eve sinned, they realized that their relationship with God had changed. They were no longer living in harmony with Him. When He approached, they did not welcome His presence. Instead, they “*hid themselves*” (Genesis 3:8). There was a painful separation, a kind of wall between them and God.

This was the first human experience of guilt. Since that day, guilt has become a common condition for all of us.

Many factors can trigger guilt. We might have disobeyed God or said or done things that violated His Word. This kind of guilt can haunt our minds and hearts. Even Christians can find it difficult to overcome guilt.

God provided a way for us to overcome these guilty feelings. Paul wrote that Jesus “*was betrayed and put to death because of our misdeeds*” (Romans 4:25). So because of His death and resurrection, we can be forgiven and escape the hold guilt has on our hearts and minds.

The Bible promises, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9 NKJV). If we acknowledge our sins, we can be free and forgiven!

Are you carrying any guilt or other burdens resulting from sin in your life? Confess any sins to God, and then accept His forgiveness. Jesus died and rose again, so you could be free and live in harmony with God.

## Helpless

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 5

What does it mean to be “*helpless*”? Paul used a Greek word that means not having any strength or abilities, feeling *overwhelmed*, powerless, and weak. This was our condition when Jesus came into this world. But He came to save *helpless* people who cannot save themselves.

Throughout our lives, we *remain* helpless. We can easily trust in our own resources and abilities. But the experiences of life help us remember that conditions can change in the blink of an eye.

The Bible reminds us that we are strongest when we *completely* depend upon God. As Paul wrote, “*When I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10). When we realize that we are helpless in ourselves, when we trust in Him for everything, and when we draw on His power and unlimited resources, then we are made strong.

How can we begin to understand a love like this? It is completely contrary to human nature. God reached out to us even when we did not deserve His help.

Today, remember that “*by grace you have been saved through faith*.” This is God’s free gift (Ephesians 2:8). His “*grace is sufficient*,” for His “*power is perfected in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9). You “*can do all things through Him who strengthens [you]*” (Philippians 4:13).

Trust in Him. Have faith. Declare His promises to be true in your life. Depend on Him, and draw on His strength.

What happens when you rely on your own strength and abilities?

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*For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.*

Romans 5:6 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for being faithful and providing for all my needs. Thank You for Your abundance and blessings. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*The day of atonement...shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls... it is a day...to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God.*

Leviticus 23:27–28 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. I confess my sins and accept Your forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Pray to receive God's forgiveness today.

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## Clean and Pure

BIBLE READING: LEVITICUS 23

Clean. Spotless. Pure. These are more than just words for high priests. Once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the sacred duty of the Jewish High Priest was to enter the Holy of Holies—the presence of Almighty God—all alone.

This is part of one of three “*appointed times*” instituted by God Himself (vs. 2, 4). On these days, there were to be holy convocations. Special offerings were to be made. Specifically, the Day of Atonement was to be set aside for prayer, soul searching, confession, and repentance. It was so serious that no one could work or eat.

After the high priest made a sacrifice to atone for himself and other priests, he sacrificed a goat as a sin offering for the people. Then another goat was sent into the wilderness, symbolically taking with it the sins of the people.

Through this symbolism, we are reminded of all that Jesus has done for us. He sacrificed Himself so that we might be forgiven. Jesus also became our high priest. Like the scapegoat, He took our sins away “*as far as the east is from the west*” (Psalm 103:12).

The Day of Atonement, celebrated beginning at sundown today, still has special meaning. Remember, this is one of “*the Lord's appointed times*.” Humble yourself before Him. Seek to be clean in His sight. Receive His forgiveness, freedom, and victory!

## Questions

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 6

Paul began Romans 6 with a series of questions. This was no accident. His entire letter to the Romans is filled with questions. In the NKJV, the book of Romans has 75 questions!

Paul knew the impact questions could have. Inserting a question changes the flow of the writing and makes the words come alive for us. Whenever we read a question, we should feel *challenged*. We are being encouraged to *stop* and *think*, to consider the issues and how we might respond.

We see the impact of questions throughout Paul's ministry. For example, questions were central to what he wrote about the Lord's Supper: “*Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this?*” (1 Corinthians 11:22). Each question provides an opportunity for readers to answer Paul for themselves and think about the issues he discusses.

Jesus frequently used questions. The Old Testament, too, is filled with questions, presenting opportunities for us to think about what has been said. Although not a question, the word *Selah* is used over 70 times in the book of Psalms, encouraging us to pause and reflect.

As you read the Bible, remember to *think* about the questions asked. How would you respond? What is the deeper meaning for you?

Spend some time answering the questions posed in Romans 6.

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*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! [...] Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*

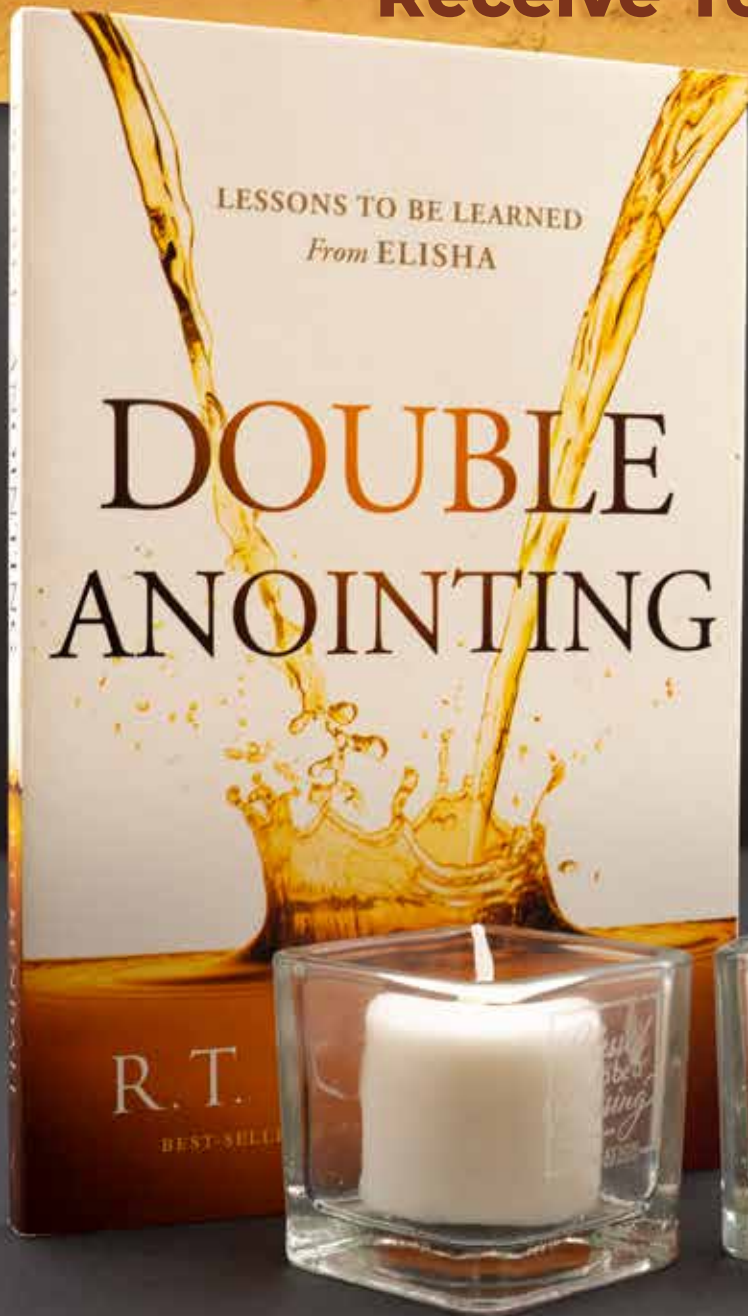
Romans 6:1–3 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me be sensitive to the questions You ask me. Teach me. Help me mature as a believer. In Jesus' name, amen.



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*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

Romans 6:6 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, I desire to walk in the newness of life. Help me embrace the complete change that has taken place because of Jesus. In His name, amen.

What does walking in the newness of life mean for you practically today?

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## The Old Self

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 6

What happens when we are born again? We don't just become better people. Paul explained the change this way: Our *“old self was crucified.”* It was put to death. Through Jesus, we have become new creatures.

This truth can be hard to understand. We still think in old ways sometimes. These are reasons Paul stressed the *analogy of death* for the transformation to be complete: *“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death.”* This is necessary that we *“might walk in newness of life”* (v. 4). In fact, we are *new creatures* in Christ.

The Bible encourages us to approach life in new ways, to realize why God gave us the Holy Spirit, to help us think in new ways, and to have power we don't have in ourselves.

The *“old self”* thinks about the things of this world—our reputations and pleasures, our feelings and interests. But everything changes when we realize that we *“died to this life, and [our] real life is hidden with Christ in God”* (Colossians 3:3 NLT).

Therefore we are to give our hearts *“to the things of heaven, not the things of earth”* (Colossians 3:2 NLT). We are to set our minds on the things above.

Today, ask God to give you a deeper revelation of this new life. Truly walk in the Spirit, and don't be controlled by your old self.

## Blessed Redeemer

BIBLE READING: LUKE 23

Avis Burgeson, encouraged by her grandmother, began writing poems when she was just ten. Born in Chicago on this day in 1895, she married Ernest Christiansen who later became a vice president of Moody Bible Institute. Avis kept writing throughout her lifetime. Before she died in 1985, she had written many hymns and published two books of poetry.

One day while listening to a sermon on the subject of Christ's atonement entitled “Blessed Redeemer,” Harry Dixon Loes, a well-known hymn writer, was inspired to compose a tune that felt appropriate. But the tune needed words.

He turned to Avis, sending her the melody with the suggested title, asking her to write lyrics. She accepted the challenge, and the resulting hymn proved a great blessing. Worshipers have been moved by the hymn's heart-felt sincerity since then.

Avis described the scene as Jesus walked up Calvary. Ahead was the horror of the cross that He faced for sinners “that He might save them from endless loss.”

Amazingly, even as He was dying, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them!” Avis sensed He was motivated by love. She could only respond, “Oh, how I love Him, Savior and Friend, how can my praises ever find end!”

For her this was personal. Jesus was her “Blessèd Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!” He wasn't just dying for sinners in general. He was “dying for me!” Yes, He was dying for you too!

Write your own prayer of thanksgiving for what Jesus has done for you.

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*When they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.*

Luke 23:33 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me. I am grateful for all that You have done. I praise You. I love You! In Your name, amen.

*But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.*

Romans 7:8 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to hide Your Word in my heart. Help me think Your thoughts. Set me free, so I can serve You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write out a verse or two to memorize this week.

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## Power of Suggestion

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 7

The power of suggestion is an ingrained part of human nature. One recent study discovered how suggestions can influence what people do, what they remember, and even what products they prefer.

The Bible confirms this pattern, showing the powerful way our minds influence our actions. When we hear an idea, that thought can become fixed in our minds. This domination can distract us and prevent us from thinking about other things.

This is a reason so much attention is given to advertising and promotion, which seek to plant thoughts in our minds by encouraging us to think about specific products and attitudes.

As the Bible suggests, the Law has this kind of impact. The Law gives us ideas of what *not* to do. As a result, ideas become planted in our minds. When the Law says, “Do not covet,” we become aware of coveting, and begin thinking about it. When the Law says, “Do not lie,” we immediately start thinking about lying. And so forth.

Paul says we must appreciate how the Law makes us aware of our sinful nature. But rather than focusing on the things we are not to do, we now are to live by grace through the Spirit.

Seek to move beyond anything that gives you an impulse to sin. Follow the leading of the Spirit. Live in accordance with God's Word.

## The Harvest Fields

BIBLE READING: JOHN 4

Jews and Samaritans were not just hostile neighbors. They were outright enemies. On occasion, Samaritans were known to kidnap Jews traveling through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem—even selling some into slavery.

Jesus saw a harvest field instead of hostilities when looking at Samaritans. He was willing to talk with them—even a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

When the disciples returned from looking for food, they could not understand why He would talk with such people. But Jesus was not worried about how other people reacted. He focused on doing the will of the Father to reach people who needed salvation.

When the disciples questioned Him, Jesus told them to *open their eyes*. They needed to let God free them of their prejudices, so they could see the world in a new way. They needed to be filled with compassion.

The fields are still white and ready for harvest. Where are these fields? They are all around us—people we know, circumstances in which we are comfortable, our homes, communities, and places of employment. But these fields also include people from different cultures, people with whom we have had differences, strangers, and people we might even consider enemies.

Ask God to let His Spirit help you see the world in a new light. Let Him show you the people you can touch. Those people are *your* harvest fields.

Where are your personal mission fields ready for harvest?

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*Behold, I tell you, raise your eyes and observe the fields, that they are white for harvest.*

John 4:35 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, open my eyes to see the world as You do. Give me compassion for the lost. Use me to reach them with the Gospel. In Jesus' name, amen.



*I tell the truth... my conscience also bearing me witness... I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.*

Romans 9:1-3 NKJV

**PRAYER:**

Father, these are people who need salvation: \_\_\_\_\_. I commit them to You. Open their eyes. Use me to impact others. In Jesus' name, amen.

Write a list of people with whom you are sharing the Gospel.

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## Reaching the Lost

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 9

Paul's feelings were so strong that he was not sure others would believe him. So he assured them that he was telling the truth, that he was not lying, that his conscience bore witness in the Spirit, and that he had "great sorrow and continual grief" in his heart. What was so important? The Jews' response to the Gospel.

He was even willing to exchange his salvation for theirs. If it were possible, he would sacrifice himself on behalf of the Jews and himself be cursed by God. That was the degree of his passion.

Yes, Paul cared deeply about the Jews, his people. But he was also demonstrating his commitment to God and His Kingdom. He knew that the Gospel message was true, and he realized the implications for those who rejected salvation. Paul had dedicated his life and everything he had to reach people with the Gospel.

Today, God looks for people with that same kind of dedication to and that same passion for the Gospel. He looks for people whose hearts break at the thought of others going to hell without Jesus, who are willing to sacrifice that others might be saved.

Right now, ask God to search your heart and give you a passion to reach the lost. Dedicate your resources to spreading the Gospel. Make it your prayer to seek Him first.

## A Glad Heart

BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 15

A recent study revealed that pessimists are much more likely to develop depression. One of the conclusions was that some people "react to distressing life events by experiencing emotions such as anger, anxiety, and sadness." People with a pessimistic view of life are more likely to be *discouraged* and filled with dark emotions.

The Bible tells us that when we are depressed, everything can seem evil. But when our hearts are filled with joy and gladness, depression lifts. If we have glad hearts, all life can be "a continual feast." This implies that we experience God's presence in everything we do. There is no need for anxiety, fear, or doubt, but God can give us His joy in every situation.

Right now, do you feel pessimistic about the future? About the challenges you face? Are you plagued with doubts? Remember that His Word promises that doubt can lead to a life filled with "anxious thoughts and foreboding."

The Bible tells us that God wants to deliver you from doubt, anxiety, pessimism, and depression. If you trust Him, your life can be a "continual feast," and He can fill your heart with gladness.

Don't let your heart be anxious. Trust in God. Let Him take away your fears and doubts and replace them with hope. Draw on the presence of His Spirit to give you His joy and peace.

What situations are trying to steal your peace right now?

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*All the days of the desponding and afflicted are made evil [by anxious thoughts and foreboding], but he who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances].*

Proverbs 15:15 AMPC

**PRAYER:**

Father, fill me with Your joy. Take away my fears and doubts. I trust in You for today's challenges and the future. In Jesus' name, amen.

*They found written in the law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feast of the seventh month.*

Nehemiah 8:14 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all You have done for me. I seek first Your Kingdom and commit my life to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Reflect on the ways God has blessed you this past year.

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## Discover Tabernacles

BIBLE READING: NEHEMIAH 8

During the time of Nehemiah, the Jews discovered they had not been observing the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths). They realized why it was an important celebration.

It was instituted by God as one of His “appointed times” (Leviticus 23:2), a yearly opportunity to *remember* what He had done for them. It was a reminder not to trust in earthly possessions, but to make it a priority to seek God and His Kingdom.

During this feast, they were to build temporary dwellings and live in them for seven days, followed by a solemn assembly. They also were to give to God from the harvest He had given to them! No one was to appear before Him empty-handed. They were to bring offerings *beyond* their normal tithes and offerings. As they honored God with their gifts, He promised to bless them in *special* ways.

The Feast of Tabernacles celebration begins tonight at sundown. It presents powerful principles of God promising blessings to those who humble themselves before Him. Remember all that He has done, and bring Him offerings from His bountiful blessings.

Don't let the Feast of Tabernacles pass you by. Stop and think about all that God has done for you! Renew your commitment to seek Him first. Depend on Him to meet your needs and solve your problems. And don't appear before Him empty-handed. Make offerings from your time, talent, and treasure. Invest your resources in His Kingdom.

## Are You Disappointed?

BIBLE READING: MARK 14

In a pivotal moment of the American Revolutionary War, British forces surrendered to the colonial army in Saratoga, New York, on this day in 1777. In many ways, the hero of this battle was Benedict Arnold, an accomplished soldier in the war.

Arnold later made some bad decisions and developed many enemies. Feeling overlooked and taken for granted, he decided to switch sides. Yet after he defected, he found himself an outcast among the British as well and never received the rewards he sought.

Arnold's actions remind us of Judas Iscariot. He left everything to follow Jesus and became the disciple who kept the money.

Yet, like Arnold, Judas faced disappointment and concluded that his commitment to Jesus was futile. Feeling frustrated and taken for granted, he negotiated a deal with Jesus' enemies and betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver.

But Judas, like Arnold, discovered that he did not get what he expected from his betrayal. By giving in to temptation, disappointment, and frustration, he lost everything.

You may experience discouragement and things you do not understand. You may feel overwhelmed or underappreciated. But don't allow Satan to tempt you with thoughts of giving up or giving in to your emotions. Instead, renew your commitment to God and His Kingdom. Call on Jesus. Allow Him to fill you with hope and give you purpose and meaning.

Have you ever been tempted to give up being a disciple of Jesus?

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*Judas Iscariot... went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them... he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

Mark 14:10–11 ESV

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Take away my discouragement and doubt and give me confidence in You. I trust in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*It is not as though the word of God has failed.*

Romans 9:6 NASB

## Impossible to Fail

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 9

The rejection of the Gospel by the Jews particularly bothered the apostle Paul. As a faithful Jew himself, he knew that his people had been given the covenants, the Law, and God’s promises. God had sent prophets to warn and teach them. Yet they turned their back on Him and all that He had done for them.

Paul wanted the Romans to know that God had not failed. Regardless of the actions of other people, His Word is *always* true. He is *always* completely faithful.

Paul cited numerous examples, showing how God’s principles always have proven to be true. Over and over, He always kept His Word and fulfilled His promises.

Paul also taught that all people are flawed—both Jews and Gentiles. Yet God always remains sovereign. We can always count on Him and His Word.

David was another man who realized that people fail and don’t live up to our expectations. Even our closest friends may break their promises and disappoint us. Even those human beings we consider the *best* can fall short.

But God is different. His Word is *sure* and “*settled*” forever in Heaven (Psalm 119:89). In fact, His Law is “*perfect*” (Psalm 19:7).

Today, make sure that you place your hope and faith in God’s Word. Teach it to your family. Meditate on it. Put it into practice. You can depend upon Him. Declare His promises to be true in your life.

### PRAYER:

Father, forgive me for trusting in other people and things. Help me to trust in You. Thank You that Your Word is always true. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Write out a brief meditation on today’s Scripture passage.

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## Galilee

BIBLE READING: JOHN 7

Many Judeans looked down on people from Galilee. They felt superior since the time of Joshua when areas of Galilee remained under the influence of native people.

When the Jewish population went into exile, the influence of non-Jews intensified. At times, the Galilean area had a different political structure. Judeans even felt Galileans had an inferior accent.

Jesus faced these kinds of prejudices when He came to Jerusalem because He was from Galilee. Some received His message, concluding that He was “*the Prophet*” (v. 40). But others rejected Him because He came from Galilee.

When the chief priests and Pharisees asked their officers why they had not brought Jesus to them, they responded, “*Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks*” (v. 46).

But the religious leaders wondered if these officers had been “*led astray*” (v. 47). To them, Jesus could not be the Messiah! Demonstrating prejudice, these leaders claimed that the crowd was “*accursed*” (v. 49).

It can be easy to criticize these leaders. But even now it is possible to have these types of prejudices.

Search your heart and mind. Do you have biases and prejudices that prevent *you* from hearing from God? Are you open to the movement of His Spirit, or blinded by your assumptions?

Ask God to speak to you afresh.

What prejudices do you need to change in your own heart?

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*Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? [...] You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.*

John 7:41, 52 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Teach me deeper things. Open my heart to the work of Your Spirit. In Jesus’ name, amen.



*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments... are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Romans 13:8–9 ESV

**PRAYER:**

Father, fill me anew with Your Spirit. May Your love flow through me. And may I be motivated by love for others. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you practically show your love for someone today?

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## Motivated by Love

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 13

What is the motivation for our actions? The promise of entertainment or pleasure? Meeting our needs? Receiving rewards? Just doing what has been directed by an employer? Trying to avoid trouble? Pleasing others? Revenge? Anger? Fear?

These are examples of common motivations. But the Bible provides a motivation that is more powerful and effective than any others—love.

Individually, we can examine all the commandments in the Bible. We can know all the rules and principles. But the Bible tells us that every commandment can be summarized in this way: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Why is this so powerful? The Bible tells us that love is completely *selfless*. Love is "patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude...It is not irritable or resentful. It only "rejoices with the truth." Instead of insisting on its own way, love "endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4–7).

If we do this consistently, we will be sure to fulfill every other commandment. We will not kill, steal, or lust. We will not take advantage of others. We will not gossip. We will not have any other gods besides our God.

Today, remember that love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). It is a by-product of a life surrendered to God. Ask Him to fill your heart with His love. Make that your motivation in everything you do.

## Total Commitment

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 14

It can be natural to think about ourselves first: our needs and interests, our feelings and pleasures. But everything changes when we surrender our lives to Jesus. He becomes our Lord. If He is Lord, we always are to serve and trust Him. We are not to think about ourselves first anymore; we need to think about others instead. We are not to worry about anything, but we are to allow Him to meet our needs.

If we continue to struggle, we can remember the simple guideline that Paul gave: We are to be completely committed to God's Kingdom in every part of our lives.

The Bible teaches that success comes to those who make this total commitment. Their life is the Lord's. They realize, like Paul, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

This commitment can relieve us of many burdens. It frees us from cares and worries about our lives, our reputations, and how our needs will be met. When we are committed to Him, we simply serve Him all the time and are vessels for His Spirit. And we completely trust in Him for everything.

Today, surrender your life anew to God. Throughout the day, consider what this means. Take joy in serving Him, and don't seek credit for yourself. Trust in Him for everything! No matter what happens, you are His. Make a total commitment to Jesus!

Compose a prayer of commitment.

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*Not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.*

Romans 14:7–8 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I declare Jesus is my Lord. I commit the challenges I face to You. Thank You for meeting my needs and guiding me. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Let's not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this: not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's or sister's way.*

Romans 14:13 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, keep me from being an obstacle. Put a watch over my mouth. Help me to draw others to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Do some soul-searching for how you might be a stumbling block.

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## A Stumbling Block

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 14

It can be easy to become a stumbling block for others, even if we have good intentions and feel we are doing the right thing. We might do or say things that make others feel discouraged or inspire doubt or frustration. We might even cause others to lose faith or to become weaker in their walk with the Lord.

In particular, Paul stressed how we become stumbling blocks through our words. He asked, "Why do you criticize your brother's actions?" If other believers commit obvious sins, we may feel responsible to help them. But *first*, we need to search our own lives and be sure that God is leading us to do so (Matthew 18:15-18).

Jesus taught these principles in the Sermon on the Mount. He said we should not "look at the speck that is in your brother's eye" but pay closer attention to "the log that is in your own eye." Instead of rushing to judge others, we *first* need to purify our own lives by confessing our own sins. Only then will we be able to gently point out the sins in others' lives (Matthew 7:2-5).

Today, seek to live in such a way that you are not an obstacle to others. Remember that God is the judge. You will have to answer to Him and so will everyone else. Make sure that you are living for Him.

## Dealing with Stress

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 14

Men and women are filled with stress; it's a common problem. They may complain, but many will not make changes that might reduce this stress.

According to recent research, given the choice, only 8% would work fewer hours if this meant less stress. In contrast, 38% are willing to work more hours for more pay, even if this means more stress. Many simply have concluded that stress is a price to pay to be successful; it just goes with the territory.

Christians are not immune from stress. Stress comes from worries about finances, conflicts in our relationships, uncertainty about our choices, fears about world conditions, and many other areas.

The Bible promises that God wants us to have victory over stress. Paul reminded the Romans that Christians are not to focus on "eating and drinking." Rather, we are to focus on God's Kingdom. This means focusing on "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

This focus gives us balance and proper priorities. We can concentrate on doing what is right. We can be filled with peace because we trust completely in God. We can have joy because we serve Him and draw on the joy of His Spirit.

Are you filled with stress? Burdened by worries? Focus on God and His Kingdom. Trust Him. Commit your needs to Him. Let Him give you His peace.

How do you need to adjust your priorities to be less stressed?

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*For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 14:17 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, help me to live in obedience to Your Word. Fill me with Your Spirit, and give me Your peace and joy. In Jesus' name, amen.

*From Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. [...] I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.*

Romans 15:19, 29 NKJV

### PRAYER:

Father, I hunger for a deeper revelation of Your truth. Open my eyes. May the power of Your Spirit come alive in me. In Jesus' name, amen.

How can you be sensitive to all the Holy Spirit wants to teach you?

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## Fully Preached

BIBLE READING: ROMANS 15

Paul was concerned that believers in Rome might not have received all the spiritual resources they needed. He assured them that he had “*fully preached*” the Gospel message everywhere he had traveled. He also told them he was coming with “*the fullness*” of blessings.

Clearly Paul was indicating that it was possible to preach part of the message. What, then, is a “*fully preached*” Gospel? What makes it complete?

Paul used related Greek words that suggest a message that is *finished*. It's carried out to the *maximum*, like a completely full container.

The message here is that there was something more, something unique that distinguished this full Gospel. This Gospel is vast and far reaching. It impacts everything about life, and it is without limits.

This full Gospel is not concerned about making us more popular or helping us impress people, but making us sanctified by the Holy Spirit. It gives us a life that has been *transformed* and is pure, consecrated, and dedicated to God. It's a life focused on God and designed to make us sensitive to His Spirit—a life filled with faith.

Don't be satisfied with a partial Gospel in your life. Don't stop at thoughts that are imitations and superficial messages. Don't settle for second-hand beliefs or just part of His blessings. May your heart *hunger* for the “*fully preached Gospel*” for *all* that God has prepared for you. Don't be satisfied with anything less.

## God Still Moves

BIBLE READING: ACTS 4

Even though he grew up in a Christian home, James Finley rejected the Gospel as a young man. Yet in 1801 when he was 20 years old, he was intrigued by what he heard about the revival that was taking place in Cane Ridge, Kentucky.

Many had reacted to this camp meeting with skepticism. As Finley recalled, some pastors preached sermons describing this meeting as “the wildest fanaticism.” Christians were urged “not to go near these places,” for fear they might be “sympathetically affected.”

But Finley, like others, wanted to see for himself. When he arrived, he witnessed a “vast crowd” of about 25,000 people. The noise was “like the roar of Niagara.” Ministry was everywhere—preaching, singing, worship, prayer. Overcome by “a strange supernatural power,” he became so weak he had to sit down.

There was no doubt that God was present doing powerful things. Finley later wrote, “My hair rose up on my head, my whole frame trembled.” That meeting changed his life.

Many people throughout time have refused to believe that powerful moves of God can take place and that He still can perform miracles. Many are reluctant and skeptical. But others come with an open heart, ready to believe.

The Bible assures us that God still is at work and miracles still take place. Don't give in to doubt. Seek His presence. Worship Him. Believe that all things are possible.

What turnaround are you asking God for today?

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*What are we to do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

Acts 4:16 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I hunger for Your presence. I pray for a powerful movement of Your Spirit. Change lives. Bring a powerful revival. In Jesus' name, amen.



*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations... behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Matthew 28:19–20 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I dedicate my time, talents, and treasures to You. Show me how I can reach souls for Christ. Use me to impact lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

How are you helping to fulfill the Great Commission?

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## To the End of the Age

BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 28

Robert Finley was born in Pennsylvania to Christian parents who had come to the New World from Scotland. Attending Princeton College, he prepared for a career as a teacher of languages. But as his son James later wrote, “There were great and pressing calls for ministerial labor in the new settlements of the Carolinas and Georgia.” Robert responded.

This was a bold decision. The “country was in an unsettled state” with “the gloomy clouds of war” hanging over the land. Tensions were high between the colonies and the English government. There also were strong divisions within Americans. Some advocated independence while others remained loyal to England. Eventually these divisions exploded in a violent revolution.

Going to the mission field meant leaving behind friends and family for life in a rugged, often untamed region, without *any* financial support. There, they faced constant peril and violence. All of his wife’s brothers were killed, and Robert himself was wounded.

But as James wrote, Robert trusted “in God for help and direction.” In the face of dangers and unknowns, he refused to back down and continued preaching the Gospel.

Today, Finley is hardly a footnote in history. But he was a hero of the faith. He was more concerned with serving his Master than the world’s rewards. He was willing to leave everything behind to fulfill the Great Commission.

This still is our command until the end of the age.

## Believing Prayer

BIBLE READING: MARK 11

“Why do I see so little fruit from my ministry?” “Why are members of my church so little helped by my ministry?” These were some of the questions pastors asked Reuben Archer Torrey. His answer? “Neglect of prayer.” He reminded them, “*You do not have because you do not ask*” (James 4:2).

Often working in close harmony with Dwight L. Moody, Torrey had seen many miracles and conversions. Born in 1856, he held many crusades around the world before being called to lead Moody Bible Institute.

Torrey observed that many Christians “do not believe in prayer as bringing anything to pass that would not have come to pass even if they had not prayed.” Yes, they pray, but deep down, they don’t *really* believe that prayer changes things or that their prayers can move mountains.

The same patterns are still true. Many Christians pray at least on a semi-regular basis, but how many *really* believe that anything is possible if they pray in faith? How many believe that they can speak to a mountain, and it will “*be taken up and cast into a sea*”?

How about you? Do you really believe God’s Word? Are you willing to humble yourself and seek His face? Do you seek first His Kingdom? Do you really believe that prayer matters?

Commit yourself to prayer. Seek God for yourself, for your family, for your country, and the world.

How can you increase your faith when you pray?

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*Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, “Be taken up and thrown into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.*

Mark 11:23 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for the answers! Anything is possible with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Elijah...said to Ahab,  
"As the LORD, the God of  
Israel lives, before whom  
I stand, surely there  
shall be neither dew nor  
rain during these years,  
except by my word."*

1 Kings 17:1–2 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I commit these needs to You: \_\_\_\_\_. Thank You for the answers! All things are possible. In Jesus' name, amen.

What astounding things are you praying for today?

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## Pray with Authority

BIBLE READING: 1 KINGS 17

Elijah stood all alone before King Ahab. Armies or throngs of people did not back him. In the flesh, he could have panicked, hesitated, or backed down.

Faced with similar circumstances, others might have felt afraid and helpless. They might assume that the real power was with armies and kings, the wealthy and powerful, or even the forces of darkness.

But Elijah was *fearless* and *confident*. He *knew* that God was sovereign and had given him *real* authority. He was bold enough to *believe* Him and step out in faith.

In his writings about prayer, R.A. Torrey taught that many Christians simply did not understand or believe in the real power of prayer and that few prayed with authority.

Writing more than a hundred years ago, he reminded readers about Elijah and how "astounding things" were "brought to pass by his prayers." At his word, the heavens were closed. Only at his word were they opened again.

The Bible reminds us that Elijah did not have superhuman powers. His nature was just like ours (James 5:17). If his prayers had such power, so can ours!

Are you willing to pray with authority? Don't allow doubt and disbelief to dominate your heart and mind. Trust God's Word. Exercise the *authority* He *already* has given you. Believe that prayer changes things. Don't limit your prayers or feel intimidated. Believe God for "astounding things."

## Persistence

BIBLE READING: LUKE 11

A man came from Ireland to observe the London meetings of Reuben Archer Torrey. His assignment was to report to his grandfather whether this was "a real work of God."

Years earlier, the grandfather had been part of a commission sent to America to study revivals sweeping America. They concluded that these revivals were *real* moves of God.

Encouraged, many Irish people, including four men from Kells, started praying every Saturday for years for revival in their country. The grandfather was one of those men. But nothing *seemed* to happen.

After the grandson reported that Torrey's crusade was of God, the men decided to preach in an effort to bring about revival. But "their attempt was a failure, so they went back and kept on praying." Finally, "the fire of God fell." God had rewarded their persistence.

Lives were changed dramatically. "Courts adjourned because there were no cases to try; jails were closed because there were no prisoners." Many "notorious and hardened and hopeless sinners" were converted. People were so consumed by the things of God that they had no time to attend even to ordinary matters.

These men learned the power of *persistent* prayer—to keep praying even if they didn't immediately see results. Their continual prayers eventually produced fruit.

That same principle is still true. Do *you* believe in the power of prayer? Pray earnestly. Pray without ceasing.

Write out one of your most persistent prayers.

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*Because of his  
shamelessness he will  
get up and give him as  
much as he needs. So  
I say to you, ask, and  
it will be given to you;  
seek, and you will find;  
knock, and it will be  
opened to you.*

Luke 11:8–9 NASB

**PRAYER:**

Father, I humble myself and commit these needs to You: \_\_\_\_\_. I believe You for breakthroughs! Bring revival. Change lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

*Now God has arranged the parts each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.*

1 Corinthians 12:18 NASB

## Your Impact

BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 12

In a world populated by seven billion people, does one person matter that much? Many, even Christians, feel they cannot make a difference. In the US for example, more than an estimated 40% of Christian adults *did not even vote* in the recent presidential elections. Obviously, many don't think their vote matters.

But history is filled with examples of how one person can change the course of a nation. In 1868, one vote in the US Senate saved President Andrew Johnson from impeachment.

In 1916, if presidential hopeful Charles E. Hughes had received one additional vote in each of California's precincts, he would have defeated President Woodrow Wilson's reelection bid. In 1955, the mayor of Huron, Ohio, was elected to office by one vote, as was the mayor of Odin, Minnesota in 1959.

Yes, one vote really *does* matter. Each person matters.

As Christians, we need to remember that we are part of the body of Christ and each person has a unique role. The body cannot succeed or be healthy unless each person fulfills their calling—that includes you.

Remember you are part of the body of Christ with a special role to fill! You have a special destiny. God has placed you in a special position and given you special assignments and special gifts and talents. Make sure you do your part. *Your* life matters. Your testimony matters. Your prayers matter. Your vote matters. *You* matter.

How are you using your gifts and talents for God's glory?

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## Your Shrewd Enemy

BIBLE READING: 1 PETER 5

As a writer and a British army officer, B.H. Liddell Hart studied and wrote about the history of warfare. These studies revealed the importance of what he called the “indirect approach.”

Hart, who was born on this day in 1895, discovered that “effective results in war have rarely been attained unless the approach has had such indirectness as to ensure the opponents’ unreadiness to meet it.” Consistently, Hart found that victories were won by armies that *disguised* their true intentions, *surprised* their opponents, and *caught* them unprepared.

In the same way, many Christians are defeated in life because they are not prepared for spiritual warfare. They forget that the devil is shrewd and deceptive. He will not announce his attacks but will seek to confuse us with mixed messages, prey on our weaknesses, and sneak up on us when we are not ready. Instead of attacking us directly, he may lash out at our family members, friends, emotions, health, or finances.

Make sure that you are on guard against these attacks. Like a lion, your enemy looks for “*someone to devour.*” Make sure that you are shielded with a strong faith. Live a life of truth; have “*a breastplate of righteousness,*” and do the right things. Be armed with the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word, and fill your life with prayer (Ephesians 6:10–17).

Be careful, always ready.

Have you put on your spiritual armor yet today?

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*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

1 Peter 5:8 NASB

### PRAYER:

Father, help me to be ready for spiritual warfare. Help me be strong in Your Spirit and armed with Your Word. Thank You for the victory! In Jesus' name, amen.



# Tabernacle with the Lord

Coming into God's presence will usher in more blessings than you ever thought possible.

Of God's three appointed times, the Feast of Tabernacles is generally the one that Christians know the least about. Although many believers haven't given much thought to the significance of Passover or Pentecost either, Tabernacles is completely off their radar screen.

Many biblical scholars believe Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles. It's pretty clear He wasn't born on December 25—a day possibly chosen because it coincided with the pagan holiday of Saturnalia.

Although the Bible doesn't specify the date when our Savior was born, we are given some clues on the season of His birth. For example, John 1:14 literally reads, "The Word [i.e., Jesus] became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we saw His glory" (John 1:14). The Greek word used here is *skēnoō*, which means to dwell or encamp in

a tent or tabernacle. This is exactly what the Israelites were told to do during the Feast of Tabernacles as they reenacted God's faithfulness to them during their sojourn through the wilderness.

Do you see what a beautiful picture this is? At the same time as God's people were living in their temporary shelters during the Feast of Tabernacles, their long-awaited Messiah came and tabernacled among them!

Throughout the Bible, you can see powerful word pictures of what it means to abide with the Lord in His tabernacle or sanctuary. One of the most powerful passages is Psalm 91:1–2 (NKJV):

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is*

*my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."*

We encourage you to read through this psalm line by line, noticing God's promises to YOU when you tabernacle with Him in His "secret place": protection from harm...deliverance from fear...honor and blessings...confidence and peace of mind...and a satisfying, long life—these are just a few of the many benefits of learning to abide in God's presence.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the cares of life today, we also encourage you to meditate on King David's declaration about finding shelter and provision in the tabernacle of the Lord:

*Hear my cry, O God;  
Attend to my prayer.  
From the end of the earth I will cry to You,  
When my heart is overwhelmed;  
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.  
For You have been a shelter for me,  
A strong tower from the enemy.  
I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;  
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings (Psalm 61:1–4 NKJV).*

Remember, God's appointed times—especially the Feast of Tabernacles—provide you with a fantastic opportunity to experience the life-changing benefits of dwelling in the presence of the Lord. He will be your "strong tower" and shelter amid life's storms. ❖

Scriptures to meditate on this month:

## Week One

*You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Psalm 16:11 NKJV

## Week Two

*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJV

## Week Three

*So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.*

Acts 17:27 NKJV

## Week Four

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

James 4:8 NKJV

# Celebrities Who Died Without a Will

Some of history's most famous people didn't take time to create a Will or Estate Plan. Here's why you don't have to follow in their footsteps and leave your loved ones vulnerable.

Many people were shocked by news reports a few years ago that rock star Prince died without a Will or Estate Plan. With an estimated estate of \$250 million, how could he neglect such an important step in financial planning?

However, Prince was not alone. Artist Pablo Picasso, billionaire Howard Hughes, and even President Abraham Lincoln all passed into eternity without designating where their earthly assets should go. Lincoln's estate took over two years to settle, and Picasso's estate took six years and cost \$30 million in legal fees.

**We can help you avoid this costly, time-consuming, and unnecessary mistake!**

Inspiration Ministries offers a complimentary, no-obligation service to assist you in starting the process of creating a Christian Will and Estate Plan. Contact our Planned Giving Department today for your FREE consultation:



US / CAN / CAR:  
**+1 (855) 702-7042**  
**inspirationPG.org**



# A Merry Heart...

does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

I always try to go the extra mile at work, but my boss always finds me and brings me back.

I can only please one person per day. Today is not your day. Tomorrow isn't looking so good either.

What's the difference between a northern fairytale and a southern fairytale?

A northern fairytale begins "Once upon a time..."  
 A southern fairytale begins "Y'all ain't gonna believe this..."



I just burned 2,000 calories. That's the last time I leave brownies in the oven while I nap!

When tempted to fight fire with fire, always remember... The fire department usually uses water.

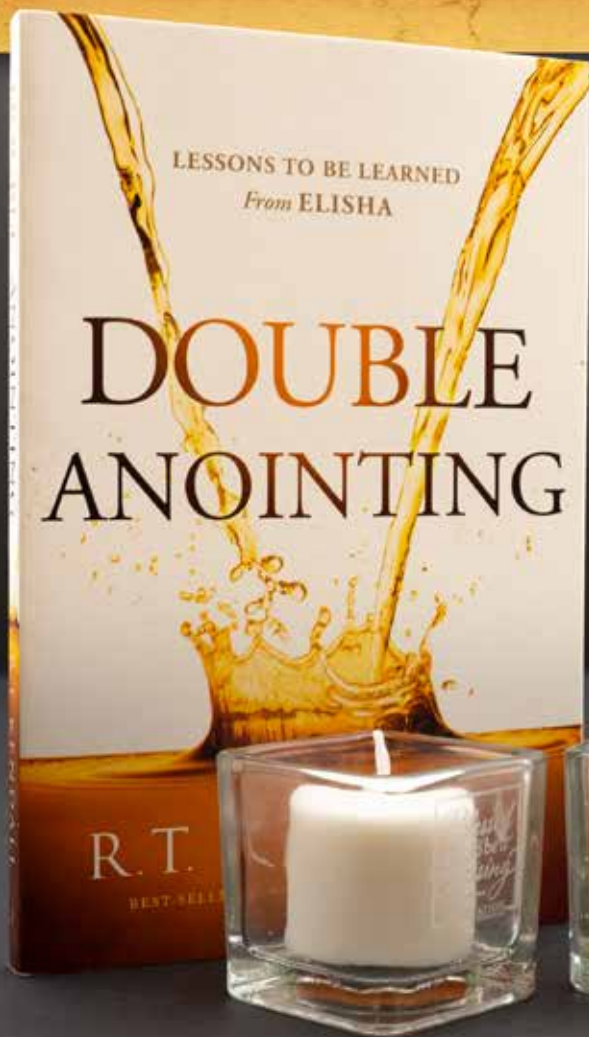


The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese!

Got some clean, Christian humor you'd like to share?  
 Email it to: [MerryHeart@inspiration.org](mailto:MerryHeart@inspiration.org)



# Your Destiny Can Be Extraordinary!



*See page 28  
for details,  
and act quickly—  
supplies are limited!*

What happens when God takes an ordinary person and gives them an extraordinary destiny? R.T. Kendall takes a look at the life of Elisha and how God called an unqualified man to become the successor to the prophet Elijah.

PLUS, we also want to send you  
our decorative Inspiration Tea Light Set.